Executive Summary

TIME FOR CHANGE

Report on the Future of the Study of Islam and Muslims in Universities and Colleges in Multicultural Britain

Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi
Malory Nye

A Report Commissioned by
Al-Maktoum Institute, Scotland

2006

Al-Maktoum Institute
Academic Press

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Published for the first time in 2006 by
Al-Maktoum Institute Academic Press
124 Blackness Road, Dundee DD1 5PE
United Kingdom
Tel: 0044 (0) 1382 908070
Fax: 0044 (0) 1382 908077
www.almipress.com

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Cover Design and Layout: Dr Khalid El-Awaisi

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A catalogue record of this book is available from the British Library.
ISBN 1-904436-07-2

Al-Maktoum Institute Academic Press

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PREFACE

This is major report based on a research project on teaching and research in the Study of Islam and Muslims in UK higher education. This research has examined fifty five higher education units where Islam and Muslims is taught, including Islamic Studies, Religious Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, as well as departments of Politics and International Relations. The report not only provides a very important overview of the current situation, but also examines some of the key issues and challenges facing the field, and makes recommendations for how the field must be reshaped and developed to make what we offer at higher education level in the Study of Islam and Muslims relevant to contemporary multicultural British society.

It is hoped that the report will play a key role in shaping and developing teaching and research in the Study of Islam and Muslim at university level in the UK. As the aim is to educate the next generation of scholars, both nationally and internationally, in the Study of Islam and Muslims, to enable them to face the challenges and opportunities of a diverse and multicultural world in the twenty-first century, there is an urgent need to set a new agenda for the Study of Islam and Muslims.

The aim of this new agenda should be to challenge and develop current teaching and scholarship, recognising that this is a time for change in Islamic Studies. There must be better education at university level on Islam and Muslims in today's world which reflects the needs of our contemporary multicultural society. The agenda should bring scholars together from all backgrounds, based on a principle of mutual respect, in order to develop a common intellectual goal in the field of the Study of Islam and Muslims.

This approach should not be faith based, and should not be left to religious organisations, but to centres for teaching and research of the highest standard based on critical and analytical debate. Through this a better understanding of Islam and Muslims can be developed--both for Muslims and non-Muslims--in an environment focused on a common sense of purpose and belonging. This agenda is timely and necessary, particularly to prevent the misguided and narrow interpretations of Islam which are the source of so many problems in our multicultural society. Indeed, it is only through multicultural education that we can work to eliminate extremism and fundamentalism.

Professor Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi
Professor Malory Nye

Al-Maktoum Institute, Scotland
October 2006

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Part 1: Setting the Scene

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1. INTRODUCTION

Time for Change

There is a clear and very obvious need for the Study of Islam and Muslims to be developed as a significant field of study across all levels of education in Britain. This is not only for the education of British youth as global citizens with a good knowledge and understanding of the contemporary world. It is also essential as a means of understanding our own multicultural society.

Teaching on Islam and Muslims has been an important part of university curricula in the UK for well over 250 years. But now is the time for change. We need to develop this field of study for today's world and, in particular, to rethink many of the loosely understood ideas that frame so much of the public debate surrounding this.

We cannot avoid the real challenges of living in a diverse, multicultural and multireligious British society. The London bombings in July 2005 and the August 2006 alleged bomb plots, and ongoing media coverage of what some call a 'clash of civilisations' all shout out to us to respond to these very real challenges. There is an urgent need to look for better ways of understanding religious and cultural diversity, in particular the role of Islam and Muslims in this dynamic, globalised context.

There is of course huge public interest in so many issues relating to Islam and Muslims in contemporary Britain, reflecting many concerns and perceived threats. This report does not intend to provide solutions to such issues. Our aim is to look at one particular aspect of this very broad set of debates -- that is, to highlight the role of education (and in particular higher education) as the key to address these issues. A re-evaluation of the teaching of Islamic Studies in British higher education will play some part in contributing to the wider issues and problems.

The Developing Debate on the Study of Islam and Muslims

This report is based on a two year research project, commissioned by Al-Maktoum Institute, Dundee, Scotland and jointly authored by Professor Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi and Professor Malory Nye. Al-Maktoum Institute is an independent research-led institution of higher education, providing programmes in the study of Islam and Muslims at postgraduate level.

The report was prompted by the perceived changes and needs in the field of Islamic Studies, particularly in the wake of major contemporary issues such as globalisation and multiculturalism, but also within the national and international context of teaching and research in the field.

These issues have been at the forefront of the agenda for Al-Maktoum Institute. Indeed, the Institute jointly hosted an international symposium in March 2004 on the future development of Islamic Studies, from which emerged a framework titled the 'Dundee Declaration', intended to start the process of mapping out the development of the field. An obvious question for the Institute has come from this, of how do the Institute's concerns relate to other higher education institutions in Britain.

The issue of multiculturalism is also firmly at the heart of the Institute's academic work, and so it established in 2002 a Centre for Research on Multiculturalism and Islam and Muslims in Scotland, which amongst other activities organised an international symposium in Spring 2006 on the 'Challenges of Multiculturalism'. The Institute was also the first higher education institution in Britain to create a professorial chair in multiculturalism (currently held by one of the authors of this report).

As a corollary of this, the authors of this report have consistently argued for a number of years that education is one of the main ways to tackle extremism. The way in which

higher education in the study of Islam and Muslim is structured and delivered must therefore be recognised as a key area for public debate and scrutiny.

The Study of Islam and Muslims in Multicultural Britain

In multicultural Britain today there are -- according to the most recent 2001 census -- approximately 1.5 million people who identify themselves as Muslims. Together these make up the largest non-Christian religious minority group in Britain, followed by Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, and people of many other faiths and none, along with people of many different Christian groups.

The majority of the British population face the considerable challenge that there are some deeply embedded issues within our society regarding Islam and Muslims, of stereotyping, hostility, Islamophobia and misunderstanding, and the legacy of orientalist thinking and attitudes is still very evident today. There needs to be appreciation that Muslims are no longer the 'others', they are part of the fabric of British society.

It is also clear that most British non-Muslims do not 'get' Islam; they do not understand what makes Muslims 'tick'. One point that comes up again and again in public debates on Islam and Muslims is the special place for Muslims of the Qur'an (the Muslim Holy Book) and Prophet Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam. The wider society needs to recognise that there is a very deep sensitivity and volatility among Muslims to all issues related to these two aspects of Muslim faith. A clear illustration of this is that the major concerns and public demonstrations by Muslims in recent years have emerged from one or both of these issues, either the Qur'an or the Prophet Muhammad (for example, the Danish cartoons controversy in February 2006 and the remarks made by Pope Benedict XVI in September 2006).

At the same time, however, we need to recognise that many British communities, including British Muslims, have failed to understand each other, and have failed to engage effectively in multicultural Britain. Indeed, there is a mutual incomprehension between communities at the heart of this, and this mutual incomprehension can only be addressed by education.

As part of this, therefore, there is a strong need to improve education among minority communities, particularly British Muslims. There is clear evidence that the current educational structures are letting down Muslims who were born and brought-up in Britain. The most favoured option so far -- of Muslim schools and colleges, set up and run by Muslims, for Muslims, for educating 'Islamically' -- is not the answer to these difficult questions. The agenda needs to be much more challenging than that for all involved.

These points strike at some of the problems and issues of multiculturalism, which is itself a well debated term in some areas of contemporary British public debate. We acknowledge that there are various debates and understandings of the concept of multiculturalism, and that there have been considerable misplaced criticisms of the term. Multiculturalism is not about separatism, ghettoisation or balkanisation, it is instead a recognition of both diversity and the need for common ground, mutual respect, and cultural engagement. The demographics of cultural diversity and pluralism in today's Britain present us with many challenges and opportunities, and the onus of public debate should be to find effective ways of managing such diversity at all levels for the benefit of the whole society. As this report argues, separatism and tokenism are not appropriate responses to such challenges.

Main Themes of the Report

This report will be setting the scene for the development of the study of Islam and Muslims, by mapping out current provision of teaching in the broad areas of Islamic Studies -- that is, in Middle East Studies and Theology/Religious Studies departments and centres. In particular we will be showing the diversity and range of specialisms covered. In doing so, we will identify the structural gaps and weaknesses of the field, in particular the problem of dividing the study of Islam and Muslims into two separate subject areas, and the current lack of cohesion in the field.

In this report we pick up the considerable discussion, particularly among academics, of what is often referred to as a 'crisis' in the teaching of Islamic Studies. It is worth noting that the authors of this report are by no means the first to identify such a sense of crisis in the field, as is evident in reports and newspaper articles dating back to 2002 and 2003. This sense of crisis is also evident in the comments collected within the research for this report from heads of departments and centres, which are included in appendix 4 of the full report.

The report also identifies the key issues of multiculturalism, globalisation, post-colonialism, and Muslims in the west, and how these set the agenda for where the field needs to be developed to meet these new challenges in the twenty-first century. The final part of the report focuses on mapping the future for the field, with nine recommendations for government, policy makers and educationalists.

All those who participate in the development of this area of higher education have the responsibility to respond to the new realities of contemporary multicultural Britain. We must ensure the integration of all aspects of society within these debates, and also recognise the need to make the issues of the field a mainstream part of our curricular.

2. THE AIMS OF THE REPORT

The aims of this report are:

i) to map out the current situation in the field of the Study of Islam and Muslims in British higher education institutions.

ii) to identify key contemporary trends and difficulties within the field.

iii) to present a framework for the development of the field which responds to the needs of a diverse and multicultural twenty-first century.

There are of course many aspects of the debates about Muslims in Britain, ranging across diverse areas of concern. We argue, though, that very little discussion has been focused on higher education, and in particular on how knowledge and understanding of Islam and Muslims is provided at this level. Therefore, the report aims to put what is being taught and researched in UK higher education institutions in the study of Islam and Muslims at the centre of public debates in Britain.

In addition, this report is intended to be a positive contribution to our understanding of current educational issues, to assist academic colleagues and policy makers working in this area. Indeed it is not by any way a criticism of any particular policy or institution. One of our main intentions is to get a debate started. We recognise that not everyone will agree with the recommendations of this report, but we sincerely hope that the report will act as a catalyst to spark a necessary debate about the role of education.

Furthermore, the aim of this report is not to examine the interpretations of Islam nor espouse any agendas concerning the 'reformation' of Islam. Additionally, the report is focused on teaching of Islamic Studies in higher education, and does not address wider issues in higher education such as the participation of Muslim students in all fields of study, or indeed their attitudes concerning higher education in the UK, or the wider Muslim community.

This report recognises that there is important work to be done on developing the curricula for teaching the Study of Islam and Muslims, both in terns of structure and content. Although some of these issues are referenced and explored in this report, it is beyond the scope of this report to address directly particular recommendations for curriculum development and delivery.

In short, the main focus of this report is to examine the study of Islam and Muslims in British higher education, and to map out how this field needs to be developed.

البروفيسور الدكتور عبد الفتاح محمد العويسي

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Brief Overview of the Methodology

The primary sources for the research in this report are the activities and documentation of the many departments and centres in the UK providing higher education programmes and courses in Arabic and Islamic Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, and Islamic Studies with Religious Studies and Theology, along with related areas such as Politics and International Relations. This section outlines the methodology followed to gather data for the project.

The development of the project followed three main stages between 2004 and 2006:

- Stage 1: the appointment of two postdoctoral Research Fellows from different disciplinary areas to make a wide-ranging survey of the departments and centres.
- Stage 2: the collation of data collected by the Research Fellows and other gathered material into a single framework by the two Project Directors.
- Stage 3: the writing of the report in summer 2006.

At the initial stage of the project in summer 2004, the two Research Fellows were given the following remit for the objectives of the research:

- To provide a review of the historical development of the study of Islam and Muslims in the UK, particularly with regard to institutional contexts for teaching and research in this area.
- To bring together information on current institutional activities in this field, particularly with reference to higher education departments and centres of Islamic Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, and Arabic Studies.
- To produce an interim report on the data and findings of the research, detailing a comparison of methods, approaches, and experiences of departments and centres in the field, along with an overview of the present standing and development of Islamic Studies in the UK.

Backgrounds of the Project Directors

The project was directed by Professor Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, and Professor Malory Nye, Depute Principal for Academic Affairs, Al-Maktoum Institute.

Professor Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi is also the founder of the new field of inquiry of Islamicjerusalem Studies, the first Chair in Islamicjerusalem Studies, and is the Director of the Centre for Islamicjerusalem Studies. He is a British Arab, and has an excellent record of research publication in both English and Arabic, most recently a ground breaking monograph titled *Introducing Islamicjerusalem*. He has been studying, teaching and researching in the Study of Islam and Muslims at both Arab and British universities for nearly 30 years. He also received his training in Middle Eastern Studies and taught for a number of years in Religious Studies before taking up his present position.

Professor Malory Nye is also the first Chair in Multiculturalism and the Director of the Centre for Research on Multiculturalism and Islam and Muslims in Scotland. He is originally from Wales, and has authored three major books, including *Multiculturalism and Minority Religions in Britain* and *Religion: the Basics*. He has also edited the scholarly journal *Culture and Religion* for a number of years.

Throughout the project the two Project Directors met on a regular basis either with the Research Fellows, the Research Assistant or on their own in order to establish, monitor

and develop the progress of the project. In the final stages of the writing of the report, the two Project Directors worked closely together to jointly produce the final project report.

Backgrounds of the Researchers

Dr Steven J. Sutcliffe completed his PhD in the Open University, and has a good background disciplinary knowledge in the study of religion in UK universities. One of the strengths of Dr Sutcliffe is that he does not have a research specialism in Islamic Studies and was therefore able to bring a fresh perspective on the issues and challenges of the teaching of Islamic Studies within Theology and Religious Studies contexts. Dr Sutcliffe is now Lecturer in Religion and Society in the School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh.

Dr Maria Holt has a PhD in Gender and Middle East Studies from the University of York. She was selected for the project on the basis of her knowledge of the area of Middle East Studies in the UK, which was in contrast to the focus on Religious Studies of Dr Sutcliffe. Therefore, Dr Holt's responsibility was to survey and conduct interviews within departments of Middle Eastern Studies, Arabic and Islamic Studies, and Politics. Dr Holt is now Research Fellow in the Democracy and Islam Programme at the Centre of the Study of Democracy, University of Westminster, London.

From June to September 2006, a Research Assistant was appointed to assist with the production of the final report. Louise Soutar is a graduate of Modern Languages (Spanish) from the University of St Andrews.

Acknowledgements

The two Directors are very grateful indeed to colleagues who gave up time in their busy schedules to answer the questionnaires of the two Research Fellows and Research Assistant and to speak to them in interviews.

We are also grateful to Frances Guy, Head of the Engaging with the Islamic World Group, and Dr Cornelia Sorabji, Head of the Research Team of the same Group for their insights and comments during the meeting with them in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 7 June 2006.

Further thanks go to Al-Maktoum Institute academic staff for their valuable comments and feedback on reading the first draft of this report.

Funding for all stages of this project was provided by the Al-Maktoum Institute Research Development Fund. The investment by the Institute in this project is a clear indication of its commitment to taking a leading role in the development of the Study of Islam and Muslims within UK higher education.

4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Arabic and Islamic Studies has been taught in the UK for over 250 years and has a history that can be located in specific university Chairs and departments. The earliest established Chairs were in Arabic: firstly at the University of Oxford in 1640 and subsequently at the University of Cambridge in 1660. A number of specialist centres and positions in Orientalism, Arabic, and Islamic Studies developed at universities including Durham, Edinburgh, Leeds and Manchester in the nineteenth century. It is also significant to note the establishment of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London in 1917 as a result of the Reay Committee Report of 1909.

Colonial Context

The development of these centres significantly coincided with the period of British colonial rule and it is clear that the growth of this discipline emerged from that context. That is, the development of the discipline of Arabic and Islamic Studies and its agenda was a response to the needs and the challenges of the time (the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries). During this colonial era, the two main purposes of the development of the discipline of Arabic and Islamic Studies were:

1. The political and administrative needs of British foreign policy within the context of colonialism.
2. The religious need, with a substantial part of scholarship in Islamic Studies being pursued by theologians and thinkers for missionary purposes.

Of course, much of the scholarship in this era was also motivated by genuine intellectual and academic curiosity. Alongside this, however, the rationale for funding and development of the discipline was firmly rooted in what the Reay Committee Report portrayed as a balance between 'pure' scholarship and 'applied' practical training for 'future Indian and colonial officials' which was a task 'of vital importance to the Empire'.

Post-Colonial Context

During the time of decolonisation in the mid-twentieth century, new needs were identified and the UK government commissioned two landmark reports which were to have a significant impact on the field throughout the second half of the century. The Scarborough Committee Report in 1948 recommended expansion of Oriental Studies in British universities and selected five universities in which special facilities were to be made available. As a consequence, for example, a School of Oriental Studies was established in Durham, with special responsibilities for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies.

The Hayter Committee Report on Area Studies in 1961 recommended extensive development in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies in the UK with particular emphasis on contemporary affairs. This report recommended special support for centres at the Universities of Durham, London and Oxford. Durham's Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies was set up in 1962.

Development in the 1960s and 1970s

- The establishment of a number of national centres was a result of the two reports.
- The development of the debate and critique of the concept of orientalism which reached its peak with the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978.
- This led to large-scale redesignation of Oriental Studies into Middle Eastern Studies but not any major structural or institutional changes.
- A number of significant international events including the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and the independence of a number of Gulf states in the late 1960s/early 1970s,

- The development of the field of Religious Studies largely from the late 1960s onwards which broadly developed along two related strands. One of these was the growth of Religious Studies sections and programmes in Theology and Divinity departments and the creation of new departments of Religious Studies particularly associated with the model established by the University of Lancaster.
- The teaching of Islamic Studies became established as one of the core 'world religions' for these new Religious Studies programmes. This led to the appointment of scholars in the departments of Religious Studies and Theology and Religious Studies to contribute to teaching on Islam.

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The Current Crisis

Following these developments in the late twentieth century, Islamic Studies and Middle Eastern Studies was no longer required to meet the needs of colonial foreign policy. This has left the field in something of a vacuum and it has so far failed to develop a significant rationale or purpose.

In addition to this, Islamic Studies has found itself in an uneasy position in balance between centres of Religious Studies and Area Studies (i.e. Middle Eastern Studies and African Studies).

The institutional allocation of Islamic Studies either within Religious Studies or within Middle Eastern Studies has prevented the field developing in an effective way and has left it in many cases marginal and vulnerable to both institutional restructuring and staffing changes.

PART 2: MAPPING THE PROBLEMS

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5. THE CHALLENGES OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

As a starting point for mapping the current problems in the field, it is essential to recognise the following four areas of challenge which have a direct bearing on the development of teaching and research in the Study of Islam and Muslims:

1. Multicultural Society
2. Globalisation
3. Independence and Post-Colonialism (two-way traffic)
4. Muslims in the West

1. Multicultural Society

Britain in the twenty-first century is clearly a multicultural society, which presents challenges at all levels of education. We acknowledge that the term multiculturalism has been subject to considerable scrutiny and debate, particularly in recent years. However, we argue that it is a very useful term to describe the complex range of issues associated with cultural and religious diversity in contemporary British society, and the social management of the challenges and opportunities such diversity offers. Of course, the term multiculturalism has a range of meanings, and there have been considerable misplaced criticisms of this term in certain areas of recent public debate.

For the authors of this report, multiculturalism is not about separatism, ghettoisation, balkanisation, or tokenism, nor is it concerned with singling out any particular community for special favour or concern. Instead the concept of multiculturalism requires us to consider the social and educational challenges of cultural diversity, along with the need for integration and common ground among British citizens of all backgrounds. Multiculturalism affects all parts of British society, and all communities.

On this basis, therefore, we argue that multiculturalism also offers distinct social and cultural advantages, and that educational development -- right up to HE level -- should involve reflection on these challenges and advantages. Because of the cultural and religious profile of contemporary Britain, the Study of Islam and Muslims is right at the heart of these issues.

- It is important to recognise that multiculturalism is not a new phenomenon, even though the terminology is new. The pace and experience of multiculturalism in the twenty-first century is intense and leaves very few societies and countries unaffected.
- Multiculturalism is not only about difference, and is misunderstood when it is pursued as a policy for separating and ghettoising particular communities.
- Multiculturalism is a process, and such processes are always contextual to particular places and cultural experiences. The experience of multiculturalism in Britain is unique to this country.
- At the heart of multiculturalism is the urgent need for the management of diversity at all levels, and education plays a very significant role within such management.
- Therefore multiculturalism is both concerned with the mutual acceptance of, and mutual respect for, difference and the requirement for common ground.
- Multiculturalism not only requires a toleration of others, it also necessitates finding ways of mutual cooperation between communities and individuals at all levels of society.

2. Globalisation

The common experience of the twenty-first century is one of rapid technological change leading to unique historical experiences of fast and easy long-distance travel; almost instantaneous communication across

continents; and widespread access to media, communication and information that transcends particular boundaries and cultures. These experiences of globalisation open up all individuals, cultures and countries in unprecedented ways and lead to unique challenges and opportunities which are probably unlike any that have been in the past.

Globalisation, therefore, is primarily about flows of people and information across cultures, boundaries and continents and the particular local responses to these flows.

Within these experiences of globalisation, and in the face of global forces that cannot be ignored, the response of isolation and ghettoisation is no longer available. The Study of Islam and Muslims again urgently needs to be able to reflect the complications of such new realities.

3. Independence and Post-Colonialism (two-way traffic)

There are close relations in the contemporary world between European nations and many Muslim majority countries in the Arab world, Asia and Africa due to the previous experiences of colonisation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The second half of the twentieth century, however, witnessed the processes of decolonisation and the emergence of independent states. In this new situation, partnership and collaboration has replaced subjugation and colonisation.

This development should lead to a better understanding of the West in Muslim countries and vice versa through both the medium of multicultural education and a recognition by scholars in all countries of the need to develop common intellectual goals in order to transcend and challenge the old 'them and us' perspectives.

4. Muslims in the West

This is the first time in history that Muslims have established themselves in significant numbers in the West, where they have become citizens of European countries. Accordingly, for the West, the Muslims are no longer the 'others' but are part of European society. Therefore, conceptualisations of the West 'versus' Islam are no longer viable. In addition, the old-fashioned Muslim jurist division of the world into *Dar al-Harb* and *Dar al-Islam* is a historical ruling and has nothing to do with the twenty-first century.

This new development in the West has provided new challenges and opportunities which need to be addressed in order to establish mutual respect and peaceful coexistence within Western societies.

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6. MAPPING THE CURRENT SITUATION: DEPARTMENTAL INTERESTS

This section reviews and analyses the data given in appendix 2 (in the main report) from departments and centres in the UK providing higher education programmes and courses in Arabic and Islamic Studies; Middle Eastern Studies; and Islamic Studies with Religious Studies and Theology, along with related areas such as Politics and International Relations.

In order to make sense of what is clearly a very fragmented field of study our approach will initially attempt to map out the main approaches and locations of teaching and research in the field on a regional basis i.e. Scotland, Wales, northern England, south west England and south east England.

As the tables and brief departmental profiles will indicate, the most significant division of the subject is into departments of Theology/Religious Studies and departments of Middle Eastern Studies/Islamic Studies.

Summary tables of departmental interests can be found overleaf.

Institutional Problems

In short, it seems a number of problems emerge from the contemporary experiences of the departments of both Middle EasternStudies and Religious Studies, including the following:

- There appears to be evidence of pressures to compromise academic standards in order to recruit overseas students to boost funding resources.
- Some departments have chosen to rely on the use of local imams and religious leaders to teach subjects related to Islamic Studies.
- As will be shown in the next section, some departments are focusing on issues that are not relevant to the twenty-first century and the needs of multicultural Britain.
- Some Middle Eastern Centres are 'virtual' web-based centres which appear to exist primarily as websites.
- As will be shown later, many Muslim religious higher education institutions focus strongly on their own international political links and agendas and often define their purposes as serving particular discrete Muslim sects or political communities rather than the wider needs of multicultural Britain.

Table 6.1
Departmental Interests --Scotland

University	Religious Studies		Middle East Studies/ Arabic and Islamic Studies		Other
	1	2	1	2	
University of Aberdeen	General	Contemporary Muslims in Britain*			Politics
Al-Maktoum Institute					• Study of Islam & Muslims • Islamicjerusalem Studies • Multiculturalism
University of Edinburgh	None at present		Languages & literature	History	
University of Glasgow	General	Sufism*/ Islamic law*			Muslims in Britain (Sociology)*
University of St Andrews			Arabic language	Early Arab history	Politics
University of Stirling	None at present				

* Research interests of current member of staff

Table 6.2
Departmental Interests -- Wales

University	Religious Studies		Middle East Studies/ Arabic and Islamic Studies		Other
	1	2	1	2	
Cardiff University	General	Muslims in Britain*			
Trinity College, Carmarthen	General				
University of Wales, Lampeter	Islamic law				

* Research interests of current member of staff

Table 6.3
Departmental Interests – North England

University	Religious Studies		Middle East Studies/ Arabic and Islamic Studies		Other
	1	2	1	2	
University of Central Lancashire					General (Education and Social Science)
University of Chester	General	Muslims in Britain*			
Durham University			Languages	Politics	
Lancaster University	None at present				
University of Leeds	General	Muslims in Britain*	Languages	History	Politics
University of Manchester			Languages	History	
Manchester Metropolitan University					General (Politics and Philosophy)

* Research interests of current member of staff

Table 6.4
Departmental Interests – South West England

University	Religious Studies		Middle East Studies/ Arabic and Islamic Studies		Other
	1	2	1	2	
University of Bristol	None at present				
University of Exeter			Languages & literature	Sufism*	Politics/Middle Eastern Studies
University of Gloucestershire	None at present				

* Research interests of current member of staff

Table 6.5
Departmental Interests -- South East England

University	Religious Studies		Middle East Studies/ Arabic and Islamic Studies		Other
	1	2	1	2	
Birkbeck, University of London					General (the Faculty of Continuing Education)
University of Birmingham	Christian-Muslim relations	• Qur'anic studies* • Islamic law* • Muslims in Britain*			
University of Cambridge	General	Sufism*	Languages & literature	History	
King's College, London	General				
University of Nottingham	General	Christian-Muslim relations*			History/Middle Eastern Studies
Open University	General				
University of Oxford			Languages & literature	History	Middle Eastern Studies/Politics
Oxford Brookes University	General				
SOAS, University of London	None at present		• Languages & literature • History	• Qur'an & Hadith studies* • Islamic & Middle Eastern law*	

* Research interests of current member of staff

7. MAPPING THE CURRENT SITUATION: REVIEW OF THEMES AND APPROACHES

Summary of Themes

From the summary of departmental profiles presented in the previous section, there are six main themes and focuses that emerge from examining the current situation:

1. Languages and literature
2. History
3. Sufism
4. Politics
5. General teaching of Islamic Studies
6. Muslims in Britain

In most --if not all-- cases, only a small cluster of these themes are taught within departments and centres as shown in the tables in the previous section. As we look down this list of the six main themes it is clear that these very particularistic concerns are reflecting individual and perhaps institutional needs and priorities, some of which do not appear relevant to the contemporary challenges outlined in section 6.

It seems the field has been shaped in the past by foreign policy and the needs of Britain as a colonial power. This can be seen from the three governmental reports: the Reay Committee Report of 1909 which led to the establishment of SOAS in 1917; the Scarborough Committee Report of 1947; and the Hayter Committee Report of 1961. It seems that a number of the current themes and interests identified above are still reflecting the educational priorities set out in these Reports which date back to half a century and more ago. In particular, the centres which were the focus of the Hayter Report investment have tended to be the least adaptable to our contemporary needs. On the other hand, there has been a growth in the field but, perhaps ironically, outside these strategically established centres.

A final point worth noting is that the combination of all six of these themes together do not in fact meet the needs for effective teaching and debate on the study of Islam and Muslims in the contemporary world and there are significant gaps that need to be considered and addressed.

However, from the above list, it seems that there is a growing current interest in social science approaches which has led to the teaching of courses related to the Study of Islam and Muslims outside the traditional departments of Arabic and Islamic Studies such as Sociology, Anthropology and Politics. This is indeed a positive move away from the traditional approaches which meet some of the needs of the twenty-first century.

We can trace this emergence of the Study of Islam and Muslims in Britain back to several developments. For example, the establishment of the Centre for the Study of Islam and Muslim-Christian Relations at Selly Oak in Birmingham in 1976 and the development of the Community Religions Project at the University of Leeds in the 1970s.

In addition, in the past ten years, there has been an intermittent Muslims in Britain Research Network in which the focus has predominantly been on the community religions model rather than on Christian-Muslim relations. With the establishment of Al-Maktoum Institute in 2001, a new centre was created in 2002 called the Centre for Research on Multiculturalism and Islam and Muslims in Scotland. This was then followed by the establishment of the Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK at Cardiff University in September 2005.

Summary of Approaches

Alongside the six main themes given above, it is also possible to map out the field as clustered into the following seven different approaches:

1. Muslim Theology (traditionalist studies)
2. Orientalist Studies
3. Arabic and Islamic Studies
4. Middle Eastern Studies
5. Religious Studies
6. Politics and International Relations
7. The emergence of the Study of Islam and Muslims

The first issue that clearly emerges from this mapping is the diversity of approaches within the field. Although such diversity could be considered a strength and advantage if it were implemented within an interdisciplinary framework, what comes through in the current situation is a clear lack of engagement. Scholars and departments across these approaches tend to work in isolation from other areas and each one tries to protect and fight for their own corner.

The first three approaches on this list reflect the older and well-established centres and scholarship associated with the early twentieth century and before. The next three approaches (i.e. numbers 4 to 6) are newer and have broadly emerged in the past thirty to forty years in particular, demonstrating more engagement with social science approaches. However, none of these approaches alone are able to provide the necessary training and research basis for addressing the contemporary challenges and needs.

In contrast, the field now needs to focus on the Study of Islam and Muslims combining the two elements: 1) the study of Islam and 2) the study of Muslims, with interaction between both and without restricting their approaches to Area Studies or Religious Studies.

The six main approaches are broadly clustered into two main institutional areas which, as noted above, are into:

- Middle Eastern Studies/Arabic and Islamic Studies
- Theology and Religious Studies

A number of issues related to these two specific subject areas can be identified as follows.

Problems in Religious Studies

Tokenism

As discussed in section 4, Islamic Studies has found itself in an uneasy position between centres of Religious Studies and Area Studies (i.e. Middle Eastern Studies and African Studies). Within Religious Studies contexts, Islamic Studies has largely tended to be included as one out of several major 'world religions' to be included in curricula largely for comparative purposes. A serious question emerges from this: how much is the teaching of Islam in such curricula driven by the needs of departments and centres solely to show inclusion? Although such inclusion of teaching and research shows recognition of Islam and Muslims as a significant minority (both locally and internationally), it can also be considered as a clear example of tokenistic multiculturalism. It does not address the local and national educational and social contexts and has no connection with the international development of the subject area.

Closures

Our researchers identified that there are currently four Religious Studies departments which previously had a specialist in Islamic Studies but which, due to staff changes, have failed to retain such specialism and are no longer able to provide full-time teaching in the subject area. These are the Universities of Stirling, Lancaster, Bristol and Gloucestershire.

In addition to this, a fifth university (Edinburgh) has similarly lost the specialist in Islamic Studies within Divinity and Religious Studies although in this case there is further provision elsewhere in the University.

These are very surprising developments, particularly because of the huge increase in public debate and interest in the Study of Islam and Muslims in the past five years and serious questions arise as to how this trend for downscaling Islamic Studies within Religious Studies has developed in the contemporary context.

One possible reason may be a widespread lack of institutional commitment to maintaining Islamic Studies as part of Theology/Religious Studies programmes, despite the prominence of issues relating to Islam and Muslims. On the other hand, there are also certain recruitment issues involved; some departments have simply not managed to recruit due to a lack of suitable experts in Islamic Studies available. This relates back to

the serious point that, if the field is well-established, why is it not producing enough home graduates and established scholars to sustain the field?

These developments also raise the serious question of whether, institutionally, the Study of Islam and Muslims should be so strongly located within the context of Theology and Religious Studies.

Problems in Middle Eastern Studies

According to the leadership of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES), the main core problems in Middle Eastern Studies are the lack of funding (by HEFCE and research bodies) and staffing difficulties with senior staff retiring and institutional failure to replace them. In addition, BRISMES is narrowly focusing on languages and the need for linguists. This argument was made by BRISMES to the Foreign Office in 2002 which largely requested solutions to this crisis based on further large-scale funding. For example, with regard to a shortfall of recruitment from overseas, BRISMES asked the government to provide money to cover the shortfall of funds usually provided by overseas students.

It seems from the argument presented by BRISMES to the Foreign Office that they are not addressing the core issues of the field and they would like to adopt the status quo of the field and focus on the old agenda. The argument made by BRISMES as a professional body for Middle Eastern Studies, which is currently suffering a decline in membership, also suggests that they are not addressing the challenges and needs of the twenty-first century.

The general problems of Middle Eastern Studies in the UK are:

- The need to change the agenda.
- The apparent decline in interest despite the post-9/11 climate.

As in the case of Religious Studies, these developments also raise the serious question of whether, institutionally, the Study of Islam and Muslims should be part of Middle Eastern Studies.

Problems with Muslim Institutions

- The Muslim College (London)
- The Institute of Ismaili Studies (London)
- The Aga Khan University (London)
- The International Colleges of Islamic Sciences (London)
- The Islamic College for Advanced Studies (London)
- The European Institute of Human Sciences (Ceredigion, Wales)
- The Markfield Institute of Higher Education (Leicestershire)
- London Open College (London)

These institutions have a faith association with their own particular religious education model. It seems that all these Muslim institutions have been established in this country at different times to cater for the specific needs of different Muslim religious and political communities (from the UK and abroad).

For example, the Muslim College was established by an Azharist scholar, the late Professor Zaki Badawi and is largely funded by Libya. The Markfield Institute of Higher Education developed out of, and is still based in, the Islamic Foundation in Leicester which has a strong connection and link with *al-Jama'a al-Islamiya* (*Jamaat-e-Islami*) in Pakistan and the Muslim Brothers in the Arab world. The European Institute of Human Sciences was established by the Muslim Brothers first in France, then in Wales. London Open College developed out of, and is based on, *Al-Muntada Al-Islami* in London which has a strong link with the *Salafi* movement in Saudi Arabia.

The International Colleges of Islamic Sciences and the Islamic College for Advanced Studies are Shi'ite institutions which have links with movements in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon. The Institute of Ismaili Studies and the Aga Khan University are part of the worldwide Aga Khan Development Network funded by its patron, the Imam Aga Khan.

The development of these Muslim religious higher education institutions has raised among some academics two important questions. That is:

- Is it right to say that Islamic Studies can only be pursued by Muslims?
- Does Islamic Studies require a Muslim institution?

The authors of this report consider the answer to both questions definitely 'no'.

However, there are signs of an emergent trend in UK thinking and practice that privileges the appointment of Muslim scholars and the provision of Muslim institutions as appropriate developments in Islamic Studies. Some have argued previously that the poor quality of Islamic Studies historically, in terms of satisfying Muslim perspectives, derives directly from the non-representation of Muslims in academic faculties. For example, it was observed by Ahsan in 1981 that the majority of teaching staff in almost all departments on Islam and the Muslim world come from Jewish, Christian or other non-Muslim backgrounds. Similarly Mahdi in 1990 complained of the exclusion of Muslim scholars from the second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam* on the grounds, as he put it, that the publication was 'not a "Muslim Encyclopedia" or an encyclopedia for Muslims'. That is, 'it made no difference what Muslims thought of such an encyclopedia, whether they liked it or not, whether it agreed with their views of Islam or not, whether they saw themselves reflected in it or not'. However, Muslims of various backgrounds are now increasingly entering further and higher education as both students and staff, and there is now a view that Muslim religious leaders, i.e. imams or *ulama* may be seen by both Muslim and secular managers as better suited to Islamic Studies appointments.

It is largely within this context that a number of Muslim institutions have developed in Britain, and similarly some university departments have chosen the option of selecting Muslim teachers on the grounds of representativeness. These options may have the advantage of redressing an historical imbalance, and also of bringing Muslims academics into the development of the field. However, they could be unhelpful when they are no more than tokenism, and may have serious consequences if they encourage and establish educational separation and isolation of cultural and religious communities.

PART 3: TIME FOR CHANGE

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8. MAPPING THE FUTURE

As agendas normally change according to time and place, the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century are very different to those of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The twenty-first century is diverse, multicultural and globalised. The missionary agenda has now given way to the principle of mutual respect and colonialism has now been superseded by independence; Muslim countries are now partners, not subjects. Muslims are also now at the heart of Western and European countries and cultures as settled and native-born European Muslims. The old one-way flow of colonial power has also been replaced by the requirement for two-way traffic in which people need to identify a common intellectual space of engagement.

At the same time, it is clear that scholarship both in Muslim countries and by Muslim academics needs to develop and respond to the changes and new contexts of this century and, in particular, to take up the responsibility for partnership and the mutual engagement that globalisation enables. In addition, the divorce between traditional Islamic Studies approaches and social sciences approaches needs to be recognised as an unhelpful and unacceptable separation which causes one of the major crises in Muslim countries.

On these bases, there is an urgent need for a new agenda to develop Islamic Studies into the Study of Islam and Muslims. This agenda should encourage us to build on the strengths of previous research and debate --that is, the orientalist and traditionalist approaches-- but also to learn from the many previous mistakes.

The first part of this new agenda is the need for academic respect by all involved in this field. This is not about political correctness or tiptoeing around issues. For example, there are some issues in this field that must be dealt with sensitively. This has often been absent in much scholarship on Qur'anic revelation and 'authorship', and the authenticity of the traditions (Hadith) of Prophet Muhammad. There are no right or wrong scholarly arguments here, but there must be ways of discussing these issues that will *engage* with Muslims rather than cause alienation, otherwise we just end up with two camps of scholars who cannot talk with each other.

At the same time, the agenda must also challenge the more 'traditionally' focused styles and approaches to 'understanding Islam', which are often deeply faith-based. As the proliferation of Muslim institutions of learning has shown, teaching on Islam is often structured on the assumption that it is only for Muslims, that non-Muslims are to be left out (or brought in on the hope of convincing). This field of study has to be open, actively challenging all involved to talk analytically about their assumptions -- both religious or otherwise. It is far too easy for Muslims to retreat to 'safe havens', to get surrounded by fellow believers, and see any scholarship beyond these safe zones as a threat. In a multicultural society, it is essential to move beyond this-- to work in a way which recognises the challenges of today.

And from these two issues, comes the crucial need for multiculturalism. The field has to create an 'open space' that brings people together in the same seminar or classroom. All sides must be willing to learn from each other and engage together in critical debate, on the basis of mutual respect. Scholars from different backgrounds urgently need to adopt a model of multicultural education in Islamic Studies.

Indeed, there is an urgent need to make the Study of Islam and Muslims accessible in multicultural British society in order to encourage engagement and understanding, and to breack down isolation, separation and alienation.

This report recognises that there are two current major trends within the field of Islamic Studies. One of these --particularly associated with Muslim scholars-- is often heavily theological and is a narrow academic

pursuit of 'faith seeking understanding'. The other approach, which is broadly associated with the development of orientalism, is less explicitly theological but often shows insensitivity and lack of engagement with scholars from Muslim religious backgrounds. Both approaches are very often associated with political and religious agendas.

Political and religious agendas and their activism and scholarship must be separated. Political movements --religious or secular-- very often restrict the intellectual development of scholars and impose restrictions on their freedom of thought. To be taken seriously, any academic agenda should be taken away from religious or political agendas.

The report argues that Islamic Studies is difficult to define. The Study of Islam and Muslims is as much about Muslims (people, in society and in history) as it is about 'understanding Islam'. And indeed it is about both, since Muslim people are so often in the business of trying to live according to particular understandings of Islam. The Study of Islam and Muslims therefore has very wide interdisciplinary boundaries, including History, Anthropology, Sociology, Political Studies, Religious Studies, Islamic Studies and many other disciplines.

Accordingly, the new agenda should be about how to change Islamic Studies into the Study of Islam and Muslims. There is a long way for this educational field to go; from where it is at present to where it needs to be. Our scholarship urgently needs to address the problems, challenges and opportunities of our diverse and fast-moving society.

As the scope of this report has not been able to include detailed consideration of curriculum development within the field of the Study of Islam and Muslims, the authors recognise that further research by academic educationalists is required to develop this issue. It is the aim of Al-Maktoum Institute to continue to take a leading role in such curriculum development.

On the other hand, the Study of Islam and Muslims cannot just be a side issue in British education and higher education. Too often, the issues raised in this field are relegated by institutions and policy makers to untouchable boxes on the margins of education. This report is highlighting the necessity for mainstreaming knowledge and understanding of Islam and Muslims at all levels of contemporary education in Britain.

In conclusion, there needs to be a coherent policy and strategy on the development of the field based on four important principles:

1. Facing the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century, particularly globalisation, multiculturalism and diversity.
2. Addressing the social and political needs of contemporary Britain to reflect the new realities of our society.
3. Establishing the new educational priorities of the country within national and global international contexts.
4. Interacting and engaging with scholarship on an international level; in particular, with Muslim scholars as partners, not subjects and based on mutual respect.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is the view of this report that the UK must respond to the new realities of our society. Therefore, this report encourages the government to review the current needs of the country and to set out the new educational priorities for teaching and research in the Study of Islam and Muslims in the UK.

Recommendation 1

Our society's needs are for all elements of society to be engaging within these debates and also with each other. Therefore, higher educational policy for the development of the Study of Islam and Muslims should strongly target the integration of people of all backgrounds together within this field.

Recommendation 2

To address the needs of the country, this report is identifying the study of Islam, along with the study of Muslims, in particular, the study of British Muslims and multiculturalism as priority subjects within our education system.

- As part of our multicultural society, there is a need for home scolars, British Muslims and non-Muslims, to study and engage in these debates and, in particular, to widen current academic concerns relating to the study of British Muslims. At the core of this are Muslim theological questions concerning Qur'anic interpretations and Muslim jurisprudence within the context of multicultural British life. These need to be encouraged and firmly located within British higher educational academic research.
- In addition, in order to understand the internal structures of Islam, to address the needs of British Muslims, and to avoid Muslims being isolated from mainstream British society and radicalised into adopting extreme views, this report recommends that there is a need to have a focus on the Study of Islam as a religion. In particular, the core Muslim sources and approaches should be studied academically within the context of multicultural higher education institutions.

Recommendation 3

The report recognises that there is no single methodology or approach, but is both interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary. Therefore, the report recommends that adopting interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches in the Study of Islam and Muslims will indeed help to attract Muslim and non-Muslim students to engage in an intellectual debate which will help promote and foster a multicultural Britain, helping to promote integration and the development of common ground. Indeed, interdisciplinarity should not be viewed as a risk but a reward to students and society.

Recommendation 4

It is the view of this report that it is a mistake to include Islamic Studies under Middle Eastern Studies or Religious Studies. What we need is the emergence of a new agenda and vision for the Study of Islam and Muslims with new themes and approaches. To show an institutional commitment to the field:

1) There should be a separate RAE panel in the field of the Study of Islam and Muslims.
2) Islamic Studies should be separated from Theology and Religious Studies and Middle Eastern Studies and be established in its own right as the Study of Islam and Muslims.

This will encourage the British higher educational establishment to focus its scholarly activity in coherent units by establishing departments, schools and colleges in the Study of Islam and Muslims.

Recommendation 5

As there is no specific professional body for scholars working in the Study of Islam and Muslims, this report urges scholars in the field of the Study of Islam and Muslims to establish a new professional cross-cultural academic body for the field. This body should be open to all scholars who have an academic interest in the field; and in which both Muslims and non-Muslims can share together a common sense of purpose and belonging. Indeed, the differences between our cultural and religious backgrounds are what give strength and importance to this field of the study. The different cultural lenses that we each bring add to our pursuit of a common intellectual goal.

This new professional body may be called, for example, the British Association for the Study of Islam and Muslims (BASIM).

Recommendation 6

It is a problem for the country that a number of Muslim religious higher education institutions have their own international political links and agendas and choose to isolate themselves from mainstream British society and the higher education system. These institutions very often define their purposes as serving particular discrete Muslim sects or political communities rather than the wider needs of multicultural Britain.

Therefore, the report recommends that:

- A number of such Muslim religious higher education institutions should be firmly encouraged to integrate more actively into the British higher education system, particularly on issues of quality assurance and multicultural engagement with the wider society.

- Muslim religious higher education institutions should be encouraged to focus their activities on producing and training British Muslim imams and Muslim religious leaders who understand how to live in a multicultural Britain.

- The report recognises that the issue of Muslim religious educational institutions i.e. schools, colleges and institutions, is one that needs further investigation and review at government level. We urge the government to commission a study on these institutions and their place in the development of Islam and Muslims as an integral part of multicultural British society.

Recommendation 7

The crisis in Islamic Studies is not caused by a lack of funding and, accordingly, lobbying to obtain more funds is not going to lead to suitable solutions. The core issue of this crisis is the need to change the agenda; it is not enough to ask for more money without responding to, and reflecting on, the needs and the challenges of the twenty-first century. Therefore, this report recommends that the funding of teaching and research needs to be structured and strategically planned in order to address and meet the changes in the country's needs.

Recommendation 8

The narrowly-focused claim that university departments need to produce linguists is not the answer to our society's needs. The language priority could be addressed through non-academic, low-cost recruitment e.g. through British citizens in minority language communities. Therefore, the report recommends that the shortage of language skills could be addressed by using existing skills in our society and, in particular, by the second or third generations. This will also address changes in society and save governmental funds normally spent on teaching these languages. This would be in line with the need to prioritise limited educational resources to promote multicultural Britain and the enhancement of diversity, and to meet the urgent needs in our society.

Recommendation 9

The lack and decline of the number of young, home-grown British graduates and scholars in the Study of Islam and Muslims is a matter of serious concern and needs to be proactively addressed as a matter of urgency. This is to ensure that public debate, policy and education continue to have suitably educated human resources from all backgrounds. Therefore, a priority should be given to provide training for the next generation of British nationals (of all backgrounds) to take up posts at British universities.

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El-Awaisi/Nye Report

There is a clear and very obvious need for the Study of Islam and Muslims to be developed as a significant field of study across all levels of education in Britain. This is not only for the education of British youth as global citizens with a good knowledge and understanding of the contemporary world. It is also essential as a means of understanding our own multicultural society.

Teaching on Islam and Muslims has been an important part of university curricula in the UK for well over 250 years. But now is the time for change. We need to develop this field of study for today's world and, in particular, to rethink many of the loosely understood ideas that frame so much of the public debate surrounding this.

The aims of this report are:

i) To map out the current situation in the field of the Study of Islam and Muslims in British higher education institutions.
ii) To identify key contemporary trends and difficulties within the field.
iii) To present a framework for the development of the field which responds to the needs of a diverse and multicultural twenty-first century.

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